

PRESS STATEMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE TO DEFEND ETHNIC STUDIES
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 1, 1976

Last November 19, 1976, the People's Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies organized a rally at the UH and marched to Bachman Hall to demand that President Fujio Matsuda reject Vice Chancellor Ashton's recommendation that the Ethnic Studies Program be abolished and its courses dispersed into other departments in the University.

We also demanded that the President accept the following:

1. Accept the testimonies of the October 20 Public Hearing on ESP.
2. Recognize the People's Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies as a legitimate representative of concerned students, faculty and community supporters with whom to discuss the future of the Program.
3. Agree to a definite date with the People's Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies to discuss the future of the Program.
4. Agree that no decision will be made during the Christmas vacation.

Vice President Durward Long, representing President Fujio Matsuda, and Chancellor Douglas Yamamura met with us and agreed to points 1 and 4 of our demands.

The November 19 rally and march on Bachman Hall resulted in two types of advances for the supporters of Ethnic Studies.

First, the large turnout of supporters, despite a morning of heavy continuous rain, showed that the Program has great support from within the University and from the community. We are often told that people, especially students, are apathetic. Yet between 300-400 students have participated in both our October 8 rally and October 20 Public Hearing. So we know that hundreds of students are concerned about the future of Ethnic Studies and are helping make the Program permanent. Many members of the faculty as well as hundreds in the community support us in the struggle to make Ethnic Studies permanent.

Second, the UH Administration was forced to agree to two of our demands. But more important, the Ashton Report (to abolish ESP) and the administration were exposed to the people. Chancellor Yamamura made a great reversal when he told us that the Ashton Report was only a "draft" and that he will have to consider input from students, faculty and community and may revise his recommendation. Until the time we confronted him at Bachman Hall, we had understood that the Report and recommendation was final. Vice Chancellor Ashton had even called for a press conference to announce his decision!

Faculty members of the People's Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies also made it clear that the recommendation to disperse the courses of ESP would actually abolish the Program. It is not possible to transfer courses from one department to another by administrative decree. And with the hiring freeze and cutbacks, it is doubtful if other departments would accept the courses. So Ashton's recommendation that ES could continue, but not within one program, is a "shibai" and an outright lie.

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But the UH Administration refused to recognize the People's Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies as the legitimate body representing concerned students, faculty and community with whom to discuss the future of the Program. Nor did they agree to set a date to meet with the People's Committee.

Vice President Durward Long's reason why he would not recognize the People's Committee is because it is an "external" body. He also said that the issue of Ethnic Studies is entirely an "educational" issue.

The People's Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies is organizing a rally on campus today and will march to Bachman Hall to get a commitment on our two remaining demands. The People's Committee is the legitimate body representing concerned students, faculty and community supporters of the Ethnic Studies Program. Members of the People's Committee have had extensive working relations with ES and are knowledgeable of its achievements and shortcomings. We feel that it is our right as concerned students, faculty and community supporters to have an active voice and participate in the decision-making process at this university. In particular, we are demanding that the People's Committee represent ES at all levels in the upcoming faculty and administrative review--with the faculty, the Chancellor, the President, and the Board of Regents.

It is from Ethnic Studies' basic orientation that education and the University should serve the needs of Hawaii's multi-ethnic working people that we feel that concerned students, faculty and community members should be involved to discuss the future of the Ethnic Studies Program. This is an issue that concerns what kind of education is taught at the University. And what goes on at the University affects not only the students and faculty but the community who support the University. And it is the community for whom students should serve when they graduate.

Why are the administrators afraid to recognize the People's Committee? It is because by recognizing the People's Committee, they are opening the door to more input to the decision-making process at the University. Too many times in the past have important decisions affecting our lives (such as tuition hikes, budget cut-backs, West Oahu College, etc.) been made with little public input. The Administration did not even want to hear the testimonies.

We are also calling on the Administration to set up an open public meeting with the People's Committee where all interested people can attend and observe the discussion.